

Speaking Notes for DC Ferguson
Update on Weekend Demonstrations, Media Briefing
January 28, 2022 @ 11 a.m.

Good morning,

Thank you all for being here today. This briefing will provide you with the most up to date information on the preparation for this weekend's demonstrations.

I realize there is a great deal of interest in this event from our community and in fact, across the country.

(As mentioned by General Manager Kim Ayotte, the Ottawa Police Service is the lead agency and has overall command of this event.

Over the last few days our team has been finalizing operational plans in anticipation of the demonstrations.

Planning has involved coordination with our policing and intelligence partners at all levels of government and the Ottawa Police would like to thank them for their ongoing cooperation.

Information gathered continues to indicate this will be a large and significant event that is expected to last through the weekend.

We anticipate demonstrators will arrive from several different directions in large numbers with many heavy vehicles and trucks.

Over the last few days we have received feedback and questions from members of our community.

Today, I am will provide information relating to the most common and pressing issues for our residents so that everyone understands and is aware of our approach.

Traffic and Parking

We remain in regular contact with the convoy organizers to understand their plan and to ensure they have information relative to safe driving routes and appropriate locations to park in the city. We want to ensure demonstrators can arrive and leave as efficiently and safely as possible.

The truck convoy will be directed to these specific areas as they arrive in Ottawa. City staff have been making sure appropriate signage is clearly visible including no-stopping or prohibited parking zones.

We have identified and will maintain open lanes of traffic for our first responders in emergencies throughout the course of the demonstrations.

This work has been coordinated with our partners at the City and I want to extend our thanks to our City of Ottawa colleagues for their ongoing support and tireless efforts.

Ensuring a Safe Demonstration

Our officers are here to protect the rights of individuals to demonstrate peacefully and in accordance with the law. We are also entrusted to intervene when violence and laws are broken and to restore peace. Our focus will be to preserve the safety of everyone involved; this includes Ottawa residents, demonstrators and police members.

Residents, visitors and demonstrators will see a very large police presence over the weekend. We will have officers on foot, in plain clothes and using a variety of methods to conduct evidence gathering and observation of crowds. Demonstrators and residents can expect to see our members in different uniforms, with a variety of equipment on their person and in different vehicles.

We have reassigned and deployed Ottawa Police officers and we have called for assistance from other police agencies to ensure we have appropriate resources to manage any eventuality.

We have already consulted with the Crown Attorney to ensure they are aware of our plans and approach.

While representatives from the convoy have been cooperative and have informed us that their intentions are to hold a peaceful and lawful demonstration, we are aware of other groups and individuals who are likely to attend and are not associated with the main demonstration, groups who do not share the same peaceful goals.

I would like to state that public safety is paramount. There will be consequences for any persons engaging in or inciting criminal or violent behaviour. We are prepared to deal with any such incidents including making arrests and laying charges as appropriate.

Messages to Local Community

To our fellow citizens of Ottawa, we appreciate that area businesses and residents are concerned, particularly about information they are seeing online. We want to assure them we are taking every action possible to mitigate the impacts of this event on daily life in the city.

Even with those efforts, this will have a significant impact on traffic. The stated goal of demonstrators is to disrupt traffic to bring attention to their cause.

It is simple. If you don't need be downtown this weekend, avoid the area.

For those of you who live downtown, expect delays and major traffic disruptions.

Make adjustments to schedules whether it be for groceries, shopping, work, medical appointments or deliveries.

It will be more difficult to move around, especially by vehicle.

We will work to keep you updated.

We ask that you rely on trusted sources like our Twitter feed (@OttawaPolice) as well as the City of Ottawa's feed @Ottawa_Traffic.

Finally,

I call on everyone involved in this weekend's event to be respectful of one another and the businesses and people that live here.

This pandemic has been hard on all Canadians. It is important that we show compassion for one another while exercising our rights. That includes the local community, the demonstrators and police officers who are working to keep everyone safe.

As the police service for the Nation's Capital, our officers have kept the peace at hundreds of demonstrations every year. These veteran officers know how to ensure that everyone who attends goes home safely.

I want to thank all the officers who will be engaged this weekend. This will be hard work, in cold weather and their professionalism and dedication to this city and its citizens is remarkable.